

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 NEW DE 07963 01 OF 02 031753Z  
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15  
USIA-06 AID-05 PC-01 OMB-01 EB-07 TRSE-00 AGRE-00  
/070 W

-----031859Z 057319 /44

R 031220Z JUN 77  
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3847  
INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY  
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA  
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO  
AMEMBASSY DACCA  
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD  
AMEMBASSY KABUL  
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU  
AMCONSUL MADRAS  
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 NEW DELHI 7963

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, IN  
SUBJECT: STATE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS: CAMPAIGNING IS STILL  
LOW KEY WITH ONLY A WEEK TO GO

REF: NEW DELHI 7594

SUMMARY: CAMPAIGNING FOR THE STATE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS IS OFF  
TO A SLOW START. NEITHER MAJOR PARTY IS REPEATING THE CAM-  
PAIGN BLITZ OF THE LOK SABHA POLL. THE PRESS AND OTHER OB-  
SERVERS CONTINUE TO FOCUS ON THE EXTENT TO WHICH THOSE DENIED  
JANATA TICKETS NOW RUNNING AS INDEPENDENTS OR "REBELS" WILL  
DAMAGE THE PARTY'S PROSPECTS AND WHAT THIS PORTENDS FOR FUTURE  
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PAGE 02 NEW DE 07963 01 OF 02 031753Z

JANATA COHESION. DESPITE SCATTERED PRESS REPORTS OF REBELS  
RETIRING FROM THE FIELD, WE CANNOT DETERMINE WHETHER SUCH  
RETIREMENTS ARE OCCURRING ON A LARGE SCALE. ELECTORAL ISSUES  
HAVE NOT YET CRYSTALLIZED. THE EMERGENCY ISSUES HAVE LOST  
MUCH OF THEIR PUNCH, ALTHOUGH JANATA LEADERS SEEK TO KEEP THEM  
ALIVE BY ARGUING THAT RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE "CRIMES" OF THE  
CENTER IS ALSO BORNE BY THE FORMER CONGRESS STATE GOVERNMENTS.

FOR ITS PART\* THE JANATA SUFFERS THE HANDICAPS INHERENT IN ITS ROLE AS THE RULING PARTY, AS CONGRESS CAMPAIGNERS SEEK TO HIGHLIGHT THE ALLEGED SHORTCOMINGS OF DESAI'S REGIME. LOCAL ISSUES AND PERSONALITIES, CASTE AND COMMUNAL CONSIDERATIONS AND SUCH BREAD AND BUTTER ISSUES AS PRICES, AND LAW AND ORDER ARE LIKELY TO PLAY A GREATER ROLE THAN IN THE LOK SABHA ELECTION. FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES HAVE NOT ARISEN THUS FAR. EMBASSY AND CONGEN SOURCES SAY THAT ALTHOUGH THE JANATA "WIND" HAS LARGELY DISSIPATED THE PROSPECTS ARE GOOD FOR JANATA TO WIN "COMFORTABLE" MAJORITIES IN ALL THE STATES EXCEPT TAMIL NADU AND WEST BENGAL. WE DO NOT BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT A BASIS EXISTS FOR MAKING A FORECAST ON THESE ELECTIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. WITH JUST ONE WEEK TO GO BEFORE THE FIRST DAY OF BALLOTING, CAMPAIGNING IN THE SO-CALLED "MINI-GENERAL ELECTION" HAS GOTTEN OFF TO A SLOW START. THE INTENSE HEAT IN NORTHERN INDIA AT THIS TIME OF YEAR IS SURELY ONE REASON; ANOTHER MAY BE THE FEELING THAT AFTER THE MOMENTOUS OUTCOME OF THE LOK SABHA ELECTIONS IN MARCH THE UPCOMING ROUND OF STATE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS HOLDS LITTLE ATTRACTION FOR THE AVERAGE VOTER. THE CONTESTS ARE RECEIVING MODERATELY HEAVY PRESS COVERAGE, BUT WITH FAR LESS DETAIL AND ENTHUSIASM THAN IN THE LOK SABHA POLL. IN ADDITION, NEITHER MAJOR PARTY IS REPEATING THE CAMPAIGN BLITZ OF FEBRUARY/MARCH. MRS. GANDHI, WHO EVEN TODAY IS PROBABLY CONGRESS' ONLY EFFECTIVE CAMPAIGNER, HAS DECLINED TO HIT THE HUSTINGS. MOST OF JANATA'S "BIG GUNS" OF THE LOK SABHA POLL ARE NOW SADDLED WITH MINISTERIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 NEW DE 07963 01 OF 02 031753Z

RESPONSIBILITIES IN DELHI, AND PRIME MINISTER DESAI WILL END HIS CAMPAIGNING JUNE 5 IN ORDER TO TRAVEL TO THE COMMONWEALTH CONFERENCE IN LONDON.

2. THE PRESS AND OTHER OBSERVERS CONTINUE TO FOCUS THEIR ATTENTION ON THE JANATA TICKET SCRAMBLE AND THE DEGREE TO WHICH THOSE DENIED NOMINATIONS RUNNING AS INDEPENDENTS OR "REBELS" WILL CUT INTO THE PRO-JANATA VOTE. JANATA SPOKESMEN EXPRESS CONFIDENCE THAT MANY REBELS WILL RETIRE FROM THE RUNNING AND HAVE THREATENED PERMANENT EXCLUSION FROM THE JANATA IF THEY FAIL TO DO SO. CONGRESS LEADERS MEANWHILE SAY THE JANATA IN-FIGHTING WILL BOOST THEIR ELECTORAL PROSPECTS, BOTH BECAUSE OF THE POSSIBILITY THAT JANATA SUPPORT WILL BE DRAINED AWAY BY THESE REBELS AND OF WHAT THEY REGARD AS POPULAR DISENCHANTMENT WITH THE RULING PARTY STEMMING FROM THIS "UNSEEMLY DISPLAY". THE PRESS DAILY REPORTS THE RETIREMENT FROM THE FIELD OF VARIOUS INDEPENDENTS AND REBELS, BUT SO FAR IT HAS BEEN IMPOSSIBLE TO DETERMINE FROM THESE SCATTERED ACCOUNTS WHETHER THESE ARE OCCURRING ON A WIDE-

SCALE BASIS.

3. IF THE CAMPAIGN HAS EVOKED LITTLE FERVOR THUS FAR, IT IS ALSO APPARENT THAT THE ISSUES HAVE NOT CRYSTALLIZED TO THE EXTENT FOUND IN THE LOK SABHA POLL. LOCAL ISSUES AND PERSONALITIES, AS WELL AS TRADITIONAL CASTE AND COMMUNAL CONSIDERATIONS, PLAY A GREATER ROLE IN THESE STATE ELECTIONS. BUT EVEN THE EMERGENCY, AND ALL ITS "ZULUMS" (ATROCITIES), SEEMS TO HAVE LOST MUCH OF ITS PUNCH WITH THE ENDING OF MRS. GANDHI'S REGIME. NONETHELESS, THE JANATA LEADERSHIP IS STRIVING TO KEEP THIS ISSUE ALIVE BY PURSUING COMMISSIONS OF INQUIRY AND BY ARGUING THAT RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE "CRIMES" OF THE CENTER IS ALSO BORNE BY THE CONGRESS STATE GOVERNMENTS WHICH MEEKLY CARRIED OUT MRS. GANDHI'S ORDERS. IN WHAT AMOUNTED TO AN ELECTION MANIFESTO, PRIME MINISTER DESAI LAST WEEK ISSUED AN APPEAL TO THE ELECTORATE TO "COMPLETE THE OTHER HALF OF THE L R K WHICH WAS LEFT UNFINISHED" IN MARCH

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 04 NEW DE 07963 01 OF 02 031753Z

BY VOTING FOR JANATA CANDIDATE.

4. THE CONGRESS LEADERSHIP APPEARS HARD PRESSED TO ANSWER THESE CHARGES. IN ITS ELECTION MANIFESTO, THE PARTY LAMELY SOUGHT TO EXPLAIN THAT WHILE CONGRESS POLICIES WERE ESSENTIALLY SOUND AND CORRECT, THEY HAD SUFFERED FROM POOR IMPLEMENTATION. CONGRESS HAS THE ADDITIONAL BURDEN OF CONTESTING ELECTIONS FOR THE FIRST TIME AS AN OPPOSITION PARTY AT THE CENTER. MONEY AND OTHER RESOURCES ARE IN CRITICALLY SHORT SUPPLY, WE UNDERSTAND, AND CONGRESS SURELY CANNOT RELY ON THE TRADITIONAL "ASSISTANCE" OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS.

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PAGE 01 NEW DE 07963 02 OF 02 031757Z

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 NEW DELHI 7963

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

5. WE HEAR THAT THE JANATA ALSO IS SUFFERING SOME FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES. IN ADDITION, MARARJI DESAI'S EMPHASIS ON MORALITY IN GOVERNMENT HAS LED TO JANATA LEADERS FOREGOING THE TRADITIONAL PERKS OF OFFICE. UNLIKE MRS. GANDHI, THE PM DOES NOT USE AIR FORCE PLANES IN HIS CAMPAIGN TOURS, SPURNS THE USE OF OFFICIAL VEHICLES AND ESCHEWS ANY OFFICIAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR HIS APPEARANCES. HE HAS MADE CLEAR THAT OTHER JANATA CAMPAIGNERS MUST DO LIKEWISE. IN HIS ELECTIONEERING, DESAI HAS EMPHASIZED THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF HIS NEW GOVERNMENT: ENDING PRESS CENSORSHIP, RESTORING DIGNITY AND FREEDOM TO THE JUDICIARY, AND REMOVING THE "CLIMATE OF FEAR" FROM THE PEOPLE'S MINDS. THE JANATA MUST ALSO OPERATE UNDER THE BURDENS USUALLY ASSOCIATED WITH A RULING PARTY AT THE CENTER.  
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PAGE 02 NEW DE 07963 02 OF 02 031757Z

HENCE, CONGRESS CAMPAIGNERS SEEK TO HIGHLIGHT ALLEGED SHORTCOMINGS OF DESAI'S REGIME AND SPECIFICALLY BLAME IT FOR THE RISING PRICES OF FOODSTUFFS AND OTHER ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES, LABOR DISRUPTIONS, INCREASING LAW AND ORDER PROBLEMS AND EVEN THE CURRENT POWER SHORTAGE THROUGHOUT MUCH OF NORTHERN INDIA. WHILE DESAI AND OTHER JANATA LEADERS RESPOND BY SAYING THAT THEY INHERITED A STAGNANT ECONOMIC SITUATION FROM THE PREVIOUS REGIME AND APPEAL FOR A RENEWED POPULAR MANDATE TO TACKLE THESE PROBLEMS, IT IS APPARENT THAT THESE BREAD AND BUTTER ISSUES COULD BE AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN THE WAY PEOPLE VOTE A WEEK FROM NOW. ACCORDING TO SOME OBSERVERS, ONE POTENTIALLY DAMAGING ISSUE TO THE JANATA IN AREAS DOMINATED BY LARGE LANDOWNERS (PUNJAB, HARYANA AND PARTS OF U.P.) WAS THE GOVERNMENT'S DECISION IN APRIL TO RAISE THE GRAIN PROCUREMENT PRICE BY ONLY DIVE RUPEES A QUINTAL, AN INCREASE MUCH LESS THAN WHAT WAS HOPED FOR BY WHEAT GROWERS. FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES HAVE PLAYED NO ROLE IN THE CAMPAIGN THUS FAR.

6. ASSESSMENTS BY EMBASSY AND CONGEN SOURCES, AS WELL AS REPORTS APPEARING IN THE PRESS, REFLECT A REMARKABLE DEGREE OF SIMILARITY ON POLL PROSPECTS. JANATA SOURCES, INCLUDING A GENERAL SECRETARY, GENERALLY CONCEDE THAT THE JANATA "WIND" HAS LARGELY DISSIPATED IN THE NORTH AND THAT THE PARTY CANNOT EXPECT TO REPEAT ITS CLEAN SWEEP OF MARCH. THEY PREDICT, HOWEVER, THAT JANATA WILL WIN "COMFORTABLE", "SAFE" MAJORITIES IN ALL THE STATES GOING TO THE POLLS EXCEPT TAMIL NADU AND WEST BENGAL. PRESS REPORTS INDICATE THAT JANATA SUFFERS FROM ORGANIZATIONAL DIFFICULTIES IN SOME AREAS, THAT VOTERS ARE DISILLUSIONED WITH JANATA'S APPARENT SLIDE INTO "OLD-STYLE" POLITICS AS EVIDENCED BY THE TICKET SCRAMBLE, AND THAT BREAD AND BUTTER ISSUES COULD WORK AGAINST THE PARTY. HOWEVER, CORRESPONDENTS REPORT THAT THESE HANDICAPS ARE OFFSET BY THE CONTINUING DEMORALIZATION AND DIFFIDENCE IN CONGRESS RANKS AND POPULAR ANGER AT THE CONTINUED CONTROL OF THE PARTY BY MRS. GANDHI AND THE "CAUCUS." AT PRESENT, CONGEN CALCUTTA AND MADRAS SOURCES ARE SAYING THAT THE CPM AND THE

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 NEW DE 07963 02 OF 02 031757Z

AIADMK APPEAR TO HAVE THE UPPER HAND IN WEST BENGAL AND TAMIL NADU RESPECTIVELY. WHILE POLITICIANS AND THE PRESS ARE MAKING MANY FORECASTS ABOUT WHO WILL WIN IN EACH STATE, WE ARE NOT AWARE OF ANY SURVEYS OF VOTER OPINION AND CONSEQUENTLY BELIEVE THAT NO PREDICTION CAN SAFELY BE MADE ON THIS ELECTION.

7. THIS MESSAGE IS BASED ON REPORTS FROM THE THREE CONGENS.  
GOHEEN

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## Message Attributes

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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
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**Disposition Date:** 22 May 2009  
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**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
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Margaret P. Grafeld  
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